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BELIEF IN GOD

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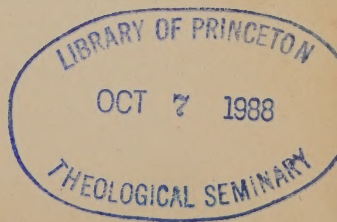
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SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THIS little book was written at the request of the Editor of the "Helps to Belief" Series. He was, however, of opinion that it was too abstruse for the class of readers for whom that Series was intended, and he therefore suggested a considerable number of alterations. But, as it appeared to me that these changes would weaken the argument, I asked permission to withdraw the book from the series; and I now publish it by itself entirely on my own responsibility.

A. W. M.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I HAVE only seen one reply to 'Belief in God,' and that was in the 'Westminster Review.' The article was very short, and not very relevant; but I have added a few footnotes with reference to the reviewer's animadversions.

A. W. M.

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BELIEF IN GOD.



CHAPTER I.

THE DESIRE FOR GOD.

THE religious sentiments are so common, that they may be considered practically universal. They are absent in certain individuals, no doubt, just as the faculty of sight is sometimes absent; but their absence is exceptional and rare. They existed in the earliest ages of which we can obtain any information, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to exist to the end of time. We find, for example, Homer saying, "As young birds open their mouths for food, so all men crave for the gods." And in the 'Vedanta' an Indian thinker—a very different type of man from Homer—expresses the same sentiment in very similar words. "As birds,"

he says, "repair to a tree to dwell therein, so all the universe repairs to the Supreme Being." Though differing much in their general views of life, the Greek poet and the Indian philosopher are both convinced as to man's profound need of God.

By the help of philology we can go back further still. Long before the time of Homer, long before the dawn of history, men had learnt to believe in God and to love Him. When the ancestors of Greeks and Indians were yet dwelling in the centre of Asia as a single and undivided nation, they had in their language a word which meant "Heaven-Father." And Max Müller has found traces of the same idea in the Semitic languages. The founder of Buddhism, it is true, is generally thought to have disbelieved in God; but his followers have very seldom preserved a strictly atheistic religion. It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that, generally speaking, all the world over men believe in a supernatural being, or in supernatural beings, with whom they desire to enter into communion, or whose favour at any rate they are anxious to obtain.

Of course religious conceptions have often been degraded. Men have frequently imagined

their gods to be merely magnified copies of themselves. But, alike in the lowest form of religion and in the highest, we see evidence of an instinct that is practically universal. Very often this is little more than an instinct of self-preservation. The worshipper seeks merely to make use of the Deity for his own private ends. For example, the negro of Guinea beats his gods when they do not gratify his wishes; and the New Zealander threatens to kill and eat them. On the same principle Jacob attempted to make a bargain with Jehovah. "If God will keep me," he said, "in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." And on the same principle again, many persons, even in civilised and Christian England, would utterly refuse to serve God for naught. Religion consists, as they think, in doing what may be necessary to escape hell.

But as a rule we find that the religious instinct prompts men to something more—to the expression, namely, of gratitude and reverence and love. Everywhere we discover traces of these higher sentiments; and though their manifestations are very diverse, the sentiments themselves

are always essentially the same. The Red Indian, before setting out on the chase, blows a few whiffs of tobacco towards heaven, because he believes that the Great Spirit delights to inhale its vapours. A grotesque act of worship this may seem to us; but it is the outcome, undoubtedly, of that very desire to do honour to the Deity, which leads to the burning of incense in some of our modern churches. It is the self-same instinct which induced the Aztecs to place seats by the roadside for their gods to rest upon; which inspired King David with a wish to build a house for the Lord; and which impelled St Paul to declare that "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." It was one and the same desire to give the Deity of their best which led men in Mexico to the lavish offering up of human victims; and in Judæa to the expression of the sentiment that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart."

It is not necessary now to inquire how the religious instinct was originally called forth, nor to investigate historically the character of its manifestations. The science of comparative religion is not yet sufficiently advanced for any dogmatic statements as to the primary religious ideas. But it is generally supposed that in the-

ology, as in all else, the human race has proceeded along a course of evolution and development. The belief in spirits may very probably have originated, as Mr Herbert Spencer suggests, from the phenomena of sleep. In dreams it would appear to the primitive man as if he possessed a double, an *alter ego*, capable of a distinct and separate existence; and in some countries the first gods men recognised may have been the doubles or ghosts of their ancestors. In other countries the first gods may have been natural objects, such as rain and wind, sun and sky; these objects, from the active powers which they manifested, seeming to the primitive man to be endowed with a personal life similar to his own. In all cases the original form of worship may have been what Professor Max Müller calls henotheism—that is, a belief in several gods, each of which was regarded at the moment of worship as for the time supreme. But one thing is certain, that religions tend to become monotheistic in proportion to the mental and moral development of the worshippers. For a time, a belief in one pre-eminently superior Deity may co-exist with a belief in several inferior deities, as was formerly the case in Egypt, and is still among many

barbarous tribes in Africa and America. But sooner or later the many become merged in the one, and the inferior deities are at last regarded as merely emissaries or attributes of the Supreme God.

Now it is a very common notion in the present day that, just as henotheism or polytheism gradually gives place to monotheism, so monotheism in its turn will be superseded by atheism, or at any rate agnosticism. Only let people have enough culture, it is said, and they will give up the belief in one God, just as they have given up belief in many gods. My answer to the assertion is this,—it is simply not true. There are no facts whatever to justify it. The world has not had any thinkers that can for a moment be compared to Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel; and these were all theists. You say, perhaps, they lived in almost antediluvian times, and so had not the benefit of listening to our modern apostles of enlightenment. Here, again, I must point out a very frequent error. It is commonly thought that nearly all the ablest men in the present day are agnostics, if not materialists. A few years ago, Mr Froude made the assertion that the foremost scientists had gone over in a body to the materialistic camp. But this was conclusively

answered by Professor Tait, who mentioned the names of Brewster, Faraday, Forbes, Graham, Rowan, Hamilton, Herschel, Talbot, belonging to the immediate past ; and Andrews, Joule, Clerk Maxwell, Balfour Stewart, Stokes, and William Thomson, who were all at that time alive. "Surely," says Professor Tait, "there are no truly scientific thinkers in Britain more advanced than these ; and each and all of them, when opportunity presented itself, have spoken in a sense altogether different from that implied by Mr Froude." No doubt there are some eminent scientists among us who are very pronounced agnostics. Their mental attitude may be accounted for partly by a prejudice against religion, excusable enough, arising from the theological persecutions of science in the past, and partly by the fact that, in regard to metaphysical subjects, they possess only that small amount of knowledge which is proverbially a dangerous thing. But whatever be the reason of their agnosticism, it does not alter the fact that they are exceptions to a general rule. Thinkers are almost always theists. Agnostic opinions, I admit, are rapidly gaining acceptance among the multitude ; but this is just because agnosticism is essentially shallow and superficial, and therefore very easily mastered.

You will see what I mean if you read consecutively Mr Frederic Harrison, the disciple of Comte, and Principal Caird, the disciple of Hegel. The claim to intellectual superiority which the agnostics put forward, appears supremely ridiculous to every one who is acquainted with the history of thought. Their opinions may be right, or they may be wrong; but in any case, they have no *a priori* claim to our veneration, for they are condemned by all the ablest thinkers of the world.

And further, it is very curious to notice, those who imagine that the belief in God can no longer be justified, often make implicit and even explicit confessions of the loss which they feel themselves to have sustained. Strauss and Comte, having got rid, as they thought, of the old God, set about making a new one. Strauss personified the universe, and Comte personified humanity; and they endeavour to persuade us that these personified abstractions are capable of satisfying the longings of the human heart. But it has often been acknowledged, even by agnostics themselves, that such satisfaction cannot be obtained, and that, though we have no reason for thinking there is a Deity, it would be indeed well for us if there were. Even when the belief in God has given

way before destructive criticism, the desire for God, as a rule, persistently remains.

In his posthumous essays, J. S. Mill defended very strongly the agnostic doctrine that we can never have any certain knowledge in regard to the supernatural. But at the same time he insisted with equal force upon the necessity of cultivating, in the region of hope and imagination, those religious ideas which had been, as he held, for ever removed from the region of belief. "The indulgence of hope with regard to the government of the universe and the destiny of man after death, if we recognise as a clear truth that we have no ground for more than a hope, is legitimate and philosophically defensible. The beneficial effect of such a hope is far from trifling. It makes life and human nature a far greater thing to the feelings, and gives greater strength, as well as greater solemnity, to all the sentiments which are awakened in us by our fellow-creatures and by mankind at large. It allays the sense of that irony of nature which is so painfully felt, when we see the exertions and sacrifices of a life culminating in the formation of a wise and noble mind, only to disappear from the world when the time has just arrived at which the world seems about to begin reaping the benefit of it.

. . . There is another and most important exercise of imagination which in the past and present has been kept up principally by means of religious belief, and which is infinitely precious to mankind ; so much so, that human excellence greatly depends upon the sufficiency of the provision made for it. This consists in the familiarity of the imagination with the conception of a morally perfect Being, and the habit of taking the approbation of such a Being as the *norma* or standard to which to refer, and by which to regulate our characters and lives. . . . To the other inducements for cultivating a religious devotion to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, it superadds the feeling that we may be co-operating with the unseen Being, to whom we owe all that is enjoyable in life. . . . It appears to me that supernatural hope, in the degree and kind in which what I have called rational scepticism does not refuse to sanction them, may still contribute not a little to give this religion [viz., the religion of humanity] its due ascendancy over the human mind."

Similarly, Professor Tyndall, at the conclusion of his Belfast Address, says: "If the human mind, with the yearning of a pilgrim for his distant home, will still turn to the mystery from which it has emerged, seeking so to fashion it as to give

unity to thought and faith,—so long as this is done, not only without intolerance or bigotry of any kind, but with the enlightened recognition that ultimate fixidity of conception is here unattainable, and that each succeeding age must be held free to fashion the mystery in accordance with its own needs,—then, casting aside all the restrictions of materialism, I would affirm this to be a field for the noblest exercise of what, in contrast with the *knowing* faculties, may be called the *creative* faculties of man. Here, however, I touch upon a theme too great for me, but which will assuredly be handled by the loftiest minds when you and I, like streaks of morning cloud, shall have melted into the infinite azure of the past.”

The same admission has been made by other writers who were even more pronounced agnostics than J. S. Mill and Tyndall. Professor Clifford, Viscount Amberley, and “Physicus” were of opinion that science had removed the religious ideas, not only from the sphere of belief, but even from that of hope and imagination. Yet they honestly admitted, in pathetic and eloquent words, the loss which had thus been inflicted on the world. Professor Clifford said on one occasion, “We have seen the spring sun shine out

of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth, and we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion was dead." Viscount Amberley again, after having endeavoured to prove that the Supreme Being is absolutely inscrutable and unknowable, and that, therefore, all the old ideas and hopes of religion must be given up, says: "I can attempt no answer to the objection which will no doubt be urged, that so abstract and cold a faith as that expounded here can afford no satisfaction to the moral sentiments. Indeed I must to a certain extent admit the reality of the loss which the adoption of this faith entails. There is consolation, no doubt, in the thought of a heavenly Father who loves us; there is strength in the idea that He sees and helps us in our continual combat against evil; there is happiness in the hope that He will assign us in another life an infinite reward for all the endurances of this. Above all, there is comfort in the reflection that when we are parted by death we are not parted for ever; that our love for those whom we have cherished on earth is no temporary bond, to be broken ere long in bitterness and despair, but a possession never to be lost again—a union of souls, interrupted for a little while by the separation of the body, only to be again renewed

in far greater perfection, and carried on into far higher joys than can be even imagined here. All this is beautiful and full of fascination—why should we deny it? Candour compels us to admit that in giving it up, with the other illusions of our younger days, we are resigning a balm for the wounded spirit, for which it would be hard to find an equivalent in all the repertories of science and in all the treasures of philosophy.”

And “Physicus” at the conclusion of his ‘Candid Examination of Theism,’ in which he has endeavoured to show that the only rational attitude of the human mind towards religious questions is that of suspended judgment, says: “It is with the utmost sorrow that I find myself compelled to accept the conclusions here worked out. I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm that the twilight doctrine of the new faith is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour of the old. I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual denial of God the universe has lost to me its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept to ‘work while it is day’ will doubtless gain an intensified force, from the terribly intensified meaning of the words, ‘the night cometh when no man can work,’ yet when at times I think, as think at times I

must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as I now find it—at such times it will ever be impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible. For, whether it be owing to my intelligence not being sufficiently advanced to meet the requirements of the age, or whether it be due to the memory of those sacred associations which, to me at least, were the sweetest life has given, I cannot but feel that for me, and for others who think as I do, the precept ‘know thyself’ has become transformed into the terrific oracle of Œdipus, ‘Mayest thou never know the truth of what thou art.’”

Now this general—almost universal—desire for God, *though it does not prove*,¹ does establish a very strong presumption in favour of, the Divine existence. A belief would not have been held in common by men at once so great and so greatly dissimilar as Plato and Paul, unless it had been supported by—to say the least—substantial evidence. An instinct which was pos-

¹ I now put these words in italics to draw attention to an oversight of the Westminster Reviewer. I do not consider the existence of God to be *proved* by the observations offered in this chapter. Had I thought so I should not have written the rest of the book.

essed alike by the poet Homer and by the philosopher Hegel; which led our Aryan ancestors to speak of the Heaven-Father; which induced Christ to teach His disciples the Paternoster; which compelled Clifford, the very type of what is called an advanced thinker, to mourn when he thought that the Great Companion was dead,—such an instinct is not very likely to turn out altogether delusive, absolutely out of harmony with fact. The presumption in favour of the existence of God, arising from a belief so universal and an instinct so persistent, is not at all affected by the flippant fallacies which half-educated writers contribute from time to time to popular periodicals. Nay, the presumption has not been perceptibly diminished by the strongest arguments which have as yet been advanced by the ablest opponents of theism. There is as much reason to-day as there ever was for believing that, though religions perish, Religion will never die—that while gods change and pass away, God endureth for ever.

CHAPTER II.

MATERIALISM.

MORE than two thousand years ago the philosophers Leucippus and Democritus founded what is called the atomic theory. In the beginning, according to this hypothesis, there was nothing but an infinite number of atoms, which moved about in all directions in infinite space. The atoms were small particles of matter differing from one another only in size and shape. Everything which now exists has been brought into being by their collisions, and by the subsequent combinations to which the collisions gave rise. In this way we can account for the origin of suns and planets, of animals and men, and even, according to Democritus, of sensation, thought, and self-consciousness. Now this theory, with certain modifications, still survives. Different views are held as to the ultimate nature of the atoms, and

the manner in which their combinations have been effected. But in some form or other the doctrine of atomism is held in the present day by nearly all the ablest physicists.

Those who hold it, however, may be divided into two very distinct classes. Some regard it as applicable only to the material world; while others think that its scope is coextensive with the universe, and contains the ultimate explanation of mind. The former class—those, viz., who restrict the atomic theory to the explanation of physical phenomena—may be, and generally are, theists: as for example, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Newton, Boyle, Clerk Maxwell, and Sir William Thomson. The latter class are materialists, and, practically at all events, atheists. Democritus himself maintained the doctrine in its widest sense. The soul, he said, consisted of atoms, but of atoms which were very fine and round and smooth like those of fire, and which were therefore capable of interpenetrating the whole body. For this atomic soul, materialists in the present day generally substitute the nervous system, the nature and uses of which were in the time of Democritus altogether unknown.

According to this view, then, matter is the cause of mind. Everything with which we are

acquainted has been compounded out of the primitive atoms. Our mental, no less than our physical, life is due simply and solely to the combination of material particles. Materialists differ very much in opinion as to what matter really is, but they are all agreed that in itself—that is to say, in its elementary constituents—it is destitute of sensation and thought. Intelligence only arises when the unintelligent atoms combine in certain complex ways. In the beginning there was no mind; there was nothing but empty space and senseless atoms. And in the end there will be no mind; it will cease to be with the dissolution of those complex material combinations to which it owes its existence. Mind is but a transitory appearance in the eternal evolution of matter.

Now any plausibility which materialism possesses, you will find to be entirely due to the vagueness of the language in which it is explained. The statements of materialists, as soon as one reflects upon them, turn out to be contradictory and absurd. Not only is their doctrine incapable of *accounting for* the facts of experience, but it is *absolutely incompatible* with them. If materialism were true, our experience would be different—or rather we should have no experience at all. From senseless and empty

space our minds could never have been produced.
Let us see.

Materialists often speak as if thoughts were identical with neural processes.¹ Ideas are in reality material things. A state of mind is neither more nor less than a particular state of body. Now reflection will show that this cannot be. Every idea, no doubt, is preceded and accompanied by certain molecular and chemical changes in the nervous system. But the idea cannot possibly be identical with these nervous changes, -for the simple reason that we perceive the one and do not perceive the other. An idea carries with it no intimation whatever as to the

¹ Here, in the first edition, occurred the following sentence: "The brain secretes thought, it has been said, just as the liver secretes bile." The Westminster Reviewer quotes this sentence to show I have misrepresented the materialists. He says: "Professor Momerie cannot be ignorant of the fact, that while the 'secretion of thought' was bandied about a century ago, a man of science would no more speak of brain secreting thought than he would speak of a piece of iron secreting magnetism." Now I did not intend to lay any stress on the word "secretion," which has been given up, but on the *idea* of secretion, which has been retained. If there be nothing in the universe but matter, then thought must be a property of matter. According to materialists, thought is a property of the brain, just as magnetism is a property of the piece of iron. I must admit the obnoxious phrase, out of deference to the sensitiveness of my reviewer. My argument of course is not affected by the omission.

nature of the physiological process to which it corresponds; and even if we knew what the process was, that knowledge, so far from being identical with the original idea, would constitute a new idea totally distinct. When I think of anything, there is doubtless a physical process in my brain corresponding to the thought; but to think about that physical process is to have a new and altogether different kind of thought. You might as well confuse the bullet in a target with the rifle and gunpowder which sent it there, as identify a thought, of which you are conscious, with a physiological process, of which you are not conscious, and which, if you were conscious of it, would be something absolutely dissimilar to your original thought.

Again, materialists very often confuse the physical organs of perception with the mental faculties which perceive. It is sometimes imagined that sights and sounds are fully explained by a description of the eye or the ear. But an organ of sense is merely, as the word itself signifies, an instrument—an instrument through which the soul receives impressions. An eye is as much an instrument as a telescope or a microscope. An ear is as much an instrument as a telephone or a microphone. And the usefulness of every

instrument depends upon there being some one to employ it. To mistake the organ of perception for the faculty of the being who perceives, is like mistaking a piano for a pianist or a fishing-net for the fisherman. Nay, it is even more absurd. For, not only are the organs of sense distinct from the faculties of perception, but no necessary connection can be discovered between the two. "It is not even probable," says Butler, "that the mind has any kind of relation to the body which it might not have to any other foreign matter formed into instruments of perception." As Aristotle and Plato long ago explained, it is not our eyes which see nor our ears which hear; it is *we* who see and hear by means of them. The sights which come to me through the retina of my eye, and the sounds which pass through the tympanum of my ear, together with the other perceptions that arise through the instrumentality of my other organs of sense,—all these perceptions are *mine*; they form part of my individual experience, and are connected in the unity of my own personal life.

To explain this unity of experience, materialists often resort to another false identification of things which are totally distinct. Not only are thoughts confused with neural processes, and

the physical organs of sense with the mental faculties of perception, but very frequently the brain is spoken of as if it were the mind or soul. The sense of personal identity, it is said, may be accounted for by the unity of brain. The erroneousness of this doctrine may be very easily proved. (1) The unity of the brain is really plurality, for the brain is extended and divisible; whereas the unity of self-consciousness is simple, for self-consciousness is unextended and indivisible: and, manifestly, two things which are totally different cannot possibly be identical. (2) If I were my brain and my brain were I, in being conscious of myself I should be conscious of my brain: and, with the continual change in its component particles, I should be aware of a corresponding change in my own identity; I should feel that I was being constantly converted into some one else. But I am not conscious of any change in my brain. I am not conscious of it at all, except in case of ill-health or disease; and, even then, it is I that am conscious of my brain, and not my brain that is conscious of itself. The mind, therefore, which is conscious and conscious of itself, must not be identified with the brain, which is unconscious both of itself and of everything else. Two things

cannot be the same when one of them possesses a quality which the other lacks.

The essential, irreducible difference between unconscious matter and conscious mind is nowadays usually acknowledged by acute thinkers of every school. There are no two men, for example, whose general ideas are more dissimilar than Professor Tyndall and Mr Ruskin; and yet they are unanimous, and have spoken in very similar terms, regarding the immaterial nature of mind. In his address to the Physical Section of the British Association in 1868, Tyndall said: "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granting that a definite thought and a definite molecular action occur in the brain simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why. Were our minds and senses so expanded, strengthened, and illuminated as to enable us to see and feel the very molecules of the brain; were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electric discharges, if such there be; and were we intimately acquainted with the corre-

sponding states of thought and feeling,—we should be as far as ever from the solution of the problem—How are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness? The chasm between the two classes of phenomena would still remain intellectually impassable.”—“So long,” says Ruskin, “as you have that fire of that heart within you, and know the reality of it, you need be under no alarm as to its chemical or mechanical analysis. It is quite true that the tympanum of the ear vibrates under sound, and that the surface of the water in a ditch vibrates too; but the ditch hears nothing for all that, and my hearing is still to me as blessed a mystery as ever, and the interval between the ditch and me quite as great. If the trembling sound in my ears was once of the marriage bells which began my happiness, and is now of the passing bell which ends it, the difference between those two sounds to me cannot be counted by the number of concussions. There have been some curious speculations lately as to the conveyance of mental changes by brain-waves. What does it matter how they are conveyed? The consciousness itself is not a wave. It may be accompanied here and there by any quantity of quivers and shakes of anything you can find in the universe that is

shakeable. What is that to me? My friend is dead, and my — according to modern views — vibratory sorrow is not one whit less, or less mysterious, than my old quiet one.”

Even Büchner occasionally admits as much as this, though generally he writes like a thorough-going materialist. He believes that thought and the soul have arisen from the combination of material atoms, yet he distinctly declares that they are not themselves material. “We do not know,” he says, “how spirit can be defined as anything else than as something immaterial in itself, excluding matter or opposed to it.” And Professor Bain advocates a doctrine which he has called “guarded or qualified materialism,” and which will, he thinks, preserve this fundamental distinction. While asserting that mind is in the last resort the outcome of matter, he still insists upon the fact that the two things are now utterly different, and quite incapable of being compared.

This recognition of the essential difference between mind and matter, which forces itself upon all thoughtful minds, has led to a kind of semi-materialism, which is much in vogue in the present day. It is often asserted that something of the nature of mind, though very crude and raw and undeveloped, existed along with matter,

or was inherent in it, from the very beginning. Every particle of matter, it is said, has a mental side. At the close of his essay on "Scientific Materialism," Professor Tyndall gives us an eloquent description of his musings on the summit of the Matterhorn. "Hacked and hurt by time, the aspect of the mountain from its higher crags saddened me. Hitherto the impression it made was that of savage strength; here we had inexorable decay. But this notion of decay implied a reference to a period when the Matterhorn was in the full strength of mountainhood. Thought naturally ran back to its remoter origin and sculpture. Nor did thought halt there, but wandered on through molten worlds to that nebulous haze, which philosophers have regarded as the source of all material things. I tried to look at this universal cloud as containing within itself the prediction of all that has since occurred. I tried to imagine it as the seat of those forces whose action was to issue in solar and stellar systems and all that they involve. Did that formless fog contain potentially the sadness with which I regarded the Matterhorn? Did the thought which now ran back to it simply return to its primeval home? If so, had we not better recast our definitions of matter and force? For

if life and thought be the very flower of both, any definition which omits life and thought must be inadequate, if not untrue." There is a similar and more frequently quoted passage at the close of the Belfast Address. The professor cites with approval Bruno's saying—"Matter is not the mere empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother, who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb." "And," continues Tyndall, "believing as I do in the continuity of Nature, I cannot stop abruptly where our microscopes cease to be of use. Here the vision of the mind authoritatively supplements the vision of the eye. By a necessity engendered and justified by science, I cross the boundary of experimental evidence, and discern in that matter, which we in our ignorance of its latent powers, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium, the promise and potency of all terrestrial life."

Haeckel, also, talks very much in the same way in the preface to his 'History of Creation.' He, too, quotes a saying of Bruno to the effect that "a spirit exists in all things, and no body is so small but it contains a part of the divine substance within itself by which it is animated."

Haeckel further quotes Goethe's remark that "matter can never exist and be active without mind." And he adds—"All bodies are equally animated; wherever there is corporeal substances there is also mental power."

Similarly the late Professor Clifford, in an ingenious but highly illogical essay upon the nature of things-in-themselves, asserts that "the molecules of matter, though devoid of mind, possess a small piece of mind-stuff." When the material particles are combined in complex ways, the little pieces of mind-stuff that go along with them become likewise similarly combined, and the result is feeling, thought, self-consciousness, personality. Thus mind—as we know it—has been, so to speak, built up out of the elementary mental atoms which accompany the elementary atoms of matter. Consciousness is just a combination of molecules which are individually unconscious.

Now mind as we know it could not possibly have been built up in this fashion. For the distinguishing peculiarity of mind is to be one and indivisible. It remains persistently itself, while its experiences change and vanish. The particles of the brain are constantly being wasted by use, and they are as constantly being replaced

by other particles. As they pass away, they must carry their pieces of mind-stuff along with them. Hence a personality is no more to be manufactured out of little pieces of mind-stuff than out of little pieces of granite-stuff. That which is one and permanent, manifestly cannot be a plexus of things which are many and transient. A personality cannot be compounded out of a number of impersonalities. If anybody thinks it can, he is capable of arguing that a scholar is nothing more than an ingenious arrangement of books, or that a sculptor might be produced by a careful collection of chisels.

Mind, therefore, can neither have been evolved from the purely material atoms of Democritus, nor from the semi-mental atoms of Clifford. Atoms did not, and could not, contain "the promise and potency" of our mental life; for the unity of consciousness cannot be the product of an unconscious, nor even of a conscious, plurality. If each of the primitive atoms had been actually aware of itself, a combination of such atoms would merely produce a union of many individuals, and not the unity of one. No "recasting of definitions" will ever make it conceivable that matter should have given rise to mind. As well might you recast the definition of canvas

to account for the art of painting. The self-consciousness which underlies all our experience, and which makes us what we are, cannot be the outcome of that which is essentially different from itself. It must proceed from another self-consciousness—viz., from the self-consciousness of God. Curious as it may appear, and little as we might have been inclined to expect it, the author of the 2d chapter of the Book of Genesis has anticipated the teaching of the highest modern metaphysics. The only possible explanation of our personal existence is this: "God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

CHAPTER III.

AGNOSTICISM.

THE word "agnostic" was invented by Professor Huxley, and means—one who does not know. In the first few centuries of the Christian era, there were various sects of philosophers who went under the general name of gnostics, and who all agreed in professing the most intimate acquaintance with the nature of God, the method of creation, and all other mysteries of existence. Agnostics, on the contrary, declare that they know nothing whatever about God; they cannot even tell whether or no such a Being exists. They are not, you will observe, dogmatic atheists; nor are they dogmatic materialists. As a rule, they recognise the ultimate and irreducible difference between mind and matter. And even when they lose sight of this distinction, as those of them do who declare that

material phenomena are capable in the last resort of *accounting* for mental, they are still far from dogmatically denying the existence of anything else.

Professor Huxley, however, gives rather a misleading account of agnosticism when he says, "It simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes what he has no scientific ground for professing to know or believe." Now that is a definition of honesty. In that sense we ought all to be agnostics. But agnosticism, in point of fact, goes on to specify certain objects, regarding which it asserts that we *never can* have any scientific ground for belief. One of these objects is the Deity.

Now our inability to know God rests, according to agnosticism, upon the fact that our knowledge is restricted to phenomena. The word phenomenon in scientific discussions does not mean, as in common parlance, something remarkable or uncommon. Etymologically it signifies that which appears; and its scientific signification corresponds with its etymology. Phenomenon stands in science for anything that appears in consciousness, either as sensation or as thought. Now the agnostics tell us—*and this is the essence of agnosticism*—that consciousness is entirely resolvable into pheno-

mena or appearances; that it is nothing more than a series of sensations and thoughts. My consciousness at any moment, they say, is just the sensation or the thought which I happen to be at that moment experiencing. My consciousness, considered as a whole, is the entire number of sensations and thoughts which I experience during my lifetime. I exist one instant as a state of sensation, another instant as a state of thought. Now I am a feeling of pleasure, and anon a feeling of pain. At this moment I am thinking of, or am the thought of, one object; a little while ago I was thinking of, or was the thought of, another object. Taking my whole life into account, I am just the sum total of these sensations and thoughts, the entire series of my varied experiences. There is nothing underlying my sensations and thoughts which remains identical while they change and pass away. I am, not myself, but my experiences. In other words, I have no soul.

Now if it can be shown that the agnostics are wrong about the soul, it will follow that they are wrong in their general principle. If we can be sure of the existence of the soul, it will follow that knowledge is not confined to phenomena. For the soul, if a soul there be, is neither a passing

sensation nor a passing thought, nor is it a collection of passing sensations and thoughts. It is a single permanent something, underlying and outlasting these transitory phenomena.

The existence of something that underlies and outlasts phenomena may be proved to demonstration by an analysis of memory. In every act of remembrance there is given to us the knowledge of our own personal identity or persistence. I remember, let us say, that ten years ago I met with an accident. Now three things are involved in this remembrance. (1) There is the fact remembered—viz., the accident. (2) There is the soul or mind, which remembers the fact, or which, as we sometimes say, *has* the remembrance. And (3) there is a consciousness of personal identity—that is to say, a conviction that the mind or soul which is now experiencing the remembrance of the fact, is the same mind or soul which formerly experienced the fact itself—that it is, in other words, *my* mind. The identity of which I am conscious is certainly not an identity of body, for during the ten years which have elapsed my body has lost its identity. Nor is the identity an identity of phenomena, for the remembrance of the fact is something essentially different from the fact itself. The identity of which I am con-

scious is an identity of soul. I am sure, I know, that I, who am now remembering a certain accident, once actually experienced it; and that in the meantime I, one and the self-same subject, a single, indivisible, permanent being, have been apprehending sensations, and thinking thoughts, and remembering events, and gathering up those varied experiences into the unity of a personal life. Without a permanent or persistent soul there could be no memory; for it is just the recognition of this permanence which is the characteristic feature of every act of remembrance. In remembering, I perceive that I, who am now recollecting, did actually exist in a different state, of which the present remembrance is only a representation. In other words, in every act of remembrance I know that I have existed in at least two different states, and that therefore I have *persisted* between them.¹

¹ In an appreciative review in the 'Inquirer' I find the following remarks: "In page 34 of this wise little volume there are some remarks by Dr Momerie on the identity of the soul under changing circumstances which we think may be open to question. For our own parts, we are not yet quite convinced of the identity of soul under all changes of culture and influence. Souls are things that grow, but in general they grow so gradually and slowly that within the compass of an ordinary human life the original germ may survive in its unity through all the changes of experience. This may be true of an ordinary human

J. S. Mill saw very clearly that the fact of memory, or the continuity of consciousness, "brings us face to face with the central principle of our intellectual nature." "The supposition of mental permanence," he tells us, "would admit of the same explanation as the permanence of the external world, and mind might be regarded as a mere series of feelings with a background of possibility of feeling, *were it not for memory and expectation*. They are in themselves present feelings, but they involve a belief in more than their own existence. They cannot be adequately ex-

life, but suppose it to be prolonged to a thousand years, and filled very full with mental activities and varied influences, is it not conceivable that then this original little germ of soul may have gradually vanished and have given place to something better and quite new? We incline to think that a man can hardly be said to possess a soul in any full sense of the word until, by much thought, feeling, action, and a general discipline of life, he has had time to form one. Now at the end of this God-directed process (if it have an end) there must, we think, be so vast a change as to amount to a loss of identity. A large, richly-cultivated soul can hardly be said to be identical with a small and neglected one. In our gradual ascent upwards is it not possible at least to reach a life where all things, even elemental things, have passed away and all has become fresh and new? The faculty of remembrance or memory is no proof of permanent identity. It only proves that our mental impressions have a certain tenacity, a tendency to last more or less long; but it proves no more. May not changes of mental condition have an obliterating effect on many of the impres-

pressed without saying that I myself had, or shall have, them." With James Mill the belief that I have seen an object implies simply an association between the idea of the object and the idea of myself seeing it. But, as J. S. Mill shows, this will not account for the phenomenon in question; for no arbitrary association between the idea of myself and the idea of an object that I have *not* seen will lead to the belief that I have seen it. I remember that yesterday I was reading Mill's 'Logic.' The remembrance involves an idea of myself reading that particular book. But this is not all. For I can frame an idea of myself

sions of memory? The pains of memory are quite as numerous as its pleasures, for our faults and follies in the past have generally outnumbered our virtues; and until the impressions of wrong and folly have been annihilated, swept out of all remembrance by fresh, pure, heavenly life, there cannot be unadulterated joy in this or any other world."

Now identity consists, not in changelessness, but in the continuity of change. No two things could well be more different than an acorn and an oak; and yet we might speak of the oak as identical with the particular acorn from which it grew. So too when we speak of any one as a "changed man," we do not mean that there has been a substitution of one individual for another; but we mean, on the contrary, that the change has taken place in the same individual. How long the faculty of memory may last, how far it depends upon circumstances and environment,—I am not here concerned to inquire. I only want to point out that the remembrance of past experience, wherever it exists, involves the continuity or oneness of the ego.

reading the book to-morrow, and the latter idea would not have the same certainty. In remembering that I read it yesterday, I am aware that my idea represents a real fact, and that the same I who am now apprehending the "idea" of that fact, yesterday apprehended the "impression," and, by reason of having apprehended both, am competent to judge as to their agreement. Mill acknowledges that to account for belief in external objects and experienced facts, we must "postulate both expectation and memory, as data presupposed and built on, in every attempt to explain the more recondite phenomena of our being." Here he has unconsciously lighted on the ego. So in another place he says, "'I' means he who previously had such and such experience." But the fact of the ego is neither explained nor done away with by using the third personal pronoun for the first. The difficulty in regard to the matter is (in one well-known passage) most honestly and clearly stated by Mr Mill: "If we speak of the mind as a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future, we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the mind or ego is something different from any series of feelings, or of accepting the paradox that something, which is *ex hypothesi* but a series of feelings, can

be aware of itself as a series." In other words, the alternative bases of philosophy must be mystery or absurdity. This does not seem, however, to be a cogent reason for founding one's system upon the latter.

The existence of a permanent something underlying and outlasting our mental states is acknowledged, and indeed insisted upon, by Mr Herbert Spencer. But he asserts at the same time that our information is confined to the mere fact of its existence; and that, therefore, we are in reality ignorant of it. In other words, we must *believe* in a permanent and persistent existence which we can never *know*.

First, let us see what he says to show that we are bound to believe in it. "How can consciousness be wholly resolved into impressions and ideas [that is, into sensations and thoughts], when an impression necessarily implies something impressed? Or, again, how can the sceptic, who has decomposed his consciousness into impressions and ideas, explain the fact that he considers them as *his*? Or once more, if he admits (as he must) that he has an impression of his personal existence, what warrant can he show for rejecting this impression as unreal, while he accepts all his other impressions as real? Unless he can give

satisfactory answers to these questions, which he cannot, he must abandon his conclusions, and must admit the reality of the individual mind."

But having thus shown that we must believe in the soul, he proceeds to argue that we can never know it. "Unavoidable as is this belief, established though it is by the assent of mankind at large, endorsed by diverse philosophers and by the suicide of the sceptical argument, it is yet a belief admitting of no justification by reason; nay, it is a belief which reason, when pressed for a distinct answer, rejects. The fundamental condition of all consciousness is the antithesis of subject and object." I had better here perhaps explain, for the sake of those who are not accustomed to philosophical terminology, that the word subject stands for the mind which perceives a thing, and the word object for the thing which is perceived. For example, when I look at this page, my mind which apprehends it is the subject, and the page itself is the object. Similarly, if I think of some abstract quality, as for instance of justice, my mind is the subject as before, and the idea or thought of justice is the object. In all consciousness, in all knowledge—as Spencer says—there must necessarily

be this union of subject and object.¹ "But," he continues, "what is the corollary of this doctrine, as bearing on the consciousness of self? The mental act in which self is known implies, like every other mental act, a perceiving subject and an object perceived. If, then, the object perceived is self, what is the subject that perceives? Or if it be the true self which thinks, what other self can be thought of? Clearly the true cognisance of self implies a state in which the knowing and the known are one, in which subject and object are identified; and this is the annihilation of both. So that the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others most certain, is yet a thing which cannot be known at all: knowledge of it is forbidden by the very nature of thought."

There is a certain law of thought, then, according to Mr Herbert Spencer, which prevents us from knowing ourselves. Now this law, let me ask you carefully to notice, he virtually gives us, in the passage I have already quoted, under two

¹ The terms mind, soul, ego, and occasionally self-consciousness or thought, are used as synonyms for the word subject. Thought, in this sense, must be distinguished from thoughts, which are mental states or objects. I have explained the problem of a metaphysical ego in a somewhat more popular way in my 'Personality,' sec. i.

different forms. First, thus: all knowledge involves the relation of subject and object. Second, thus: the object must always be something different from the subject.

Now these two modes of statement are not, as he imagines, different ways of expressing the same law; they are totally different laws. The one is a law of nature, the other is only a law of his own. To say that knowledge involves the relation of subject and object, is merely to say, knowledge means something known by some one. There can be no knowledge where there is no one to know; and contrariwise, no one can know and at the same time know nothing. This is, of course, a self-evident truth, involved in the very nature of thought. But to say that the object must always be something different from the subject—in other words, that the subject can never become an object to itself—is to make a totally different assertion,—an assertion which, so far from being self-evidently true, is evidently, if not self-evidently, false. It is false because, Spencer himself being witness, it is contradicted by experience.

Personality, he says, is “a fact of which each one is conscious.” Now, since consciousness is merely another name for knowledge, and person-

ality is but another name for self, in saying we are conscious of personality he virtually asserts that we know ourselves. Nor is there any vagueness and indistinctness about this knowledge. "Personality," he says again, is "the fact beyond all others the most certain." Now the things of which we are most certain are, of course, the things which we may most certainly be said to know. And yet the fact which stands first in the order of certainty, Mr Spencer will not allow to stand even last in the order of knowledge, but declares that in regard to it we are, and must ever remain, completely ignorant. It follows then, from Spencer's so-called law of thought, we are sure of what is somewhat doubtful, but are not sure of that in regard to which there can be do doubt; we may be said to know things of which we are comparatively ignorant, but must be declared ignorant of that which emphatically we know; all facts are knowable *except* the most certain fact of all, which is altogether unknowable: in a word, ignorance is knowledge, and knowledge is ignorance. Hence it must be inferred that Mr Spencer's supposed law of thought is merely an imagination of his own; for the real *bond fide* laws of thought never land us in absurdity.

Perhaps a parody of Mr Spencer's reasoning may make its fallaciousness more evident. Just as he tries to show the impossibility of self-knowledge, let us try to show the impossibility of self-love. We might say—"The fundamental condition of all love is the antithesis of subject and object. If, then, the object loved be self, what is the subject that loves? Or if it be the true self that loves, what other self can it be that is loved? Self-love implies the identity of subject and object; but, by hypothesis, they must always be different; therefore no man can love himself." Now, since in point of fact most persons *do* love themselves, there is manifestly something wrong about this argument. The flaw lies in the hypothesis. It is an arbitrary and false assumption that the object must always be different from the subject. The fallacy is a case of *petitio principii*—the hypothesis containing by implication the point to be proved. It may be objected, a man does not love himself exactly in the same way as he loves another. But that is no argument for restricting the word "love" to the latter case. On the contrary, since the chief difference often lies in the certainty and intensity of self-love, and the feebleness or doubtfulness of love for others, it might be urged,

and indeed has been urged by Rochefoucauld, that men never really love except when they love themselves. The doctrine of Rochefoucauld may be open to grave question; and I, for one, do not believe it to be true. But if his view were really confirmed by experience, if men's love for others was found to be universally feeble in comparison with their love for themselves, it would follow that, when we used the term in its fullest and strictest sense, we should have to say that men loved themselves alone. Similarly, if personality be, as Mr Spencer says, "a fact above all others the most certain," and if we are going to be very strict in our use of the word knowledge, so strict as to apply it only to that which is pre-eminently worthy of the name, we must say that men never know anything but themselves.¹

Now the self or ego—"the substance of consciousness," as Mr Spencer sometimes designates it—he identifies with that "fundamental reality of all being" which he calls the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Unknowable. "In each mental act there is an element which persists. But the persistence of this element under successive

¹ In regard to the problem of self-knowledge, see, further, my 'Personality,' pp. 57-62, and 'Agnosticism,' pp. 38-44.

conditions necessitates the sense of it as distinguished from the conditions and independent of them. That which is common to all states of consciousness and cannot be got rid of, is what we predicate by the term existence. Dissociated as this becomes from each of its modes by the perpetual change of these modes, it remains an indefinite consciousness of something constant under all modes—of being apart from its appearances. The contrast between the Absolute and the Relative is really the contrast between that mental element which exists absolutely and those which exist relatively. Our consciousness of the unconditioned being literally the unconditioned consciousness or raw material of thought, to which we in thinking give definite forms, it follows that an ever-present sense of real existence is the very basis of our intelligence. As we can in successive mental acts get rid of all particular conditions and replace them by others, but cannot get rid of that undifferentiated substance of consciousness which is *conditioned anew* in every thought, there ever remains a sense of that which exists persistently and independently of conditions. We have an indefinite consciousness of an absolute reality transcending relations, which is produced by

the absolute persistence in us of something which survives all changes of relation."

But the unconditioned and absolute existence of which we have this indefinite consciousness is, according to Mr Spencer, unknowable. "By the laws of thought we are prevented from ridding ourselves of the consciousness of absolute existence, and by the laws of thought we are equally prevented from forming any conception of absolute existence. To think is to condition. Conditional limitation is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought. Consciousness is only possible under the antithesis of a subject and object of thought, known in correlation and mutually limiting each other." The unconditioned, then, in spite of our "indefinite consciousness" of it, cannot be thought of, much less known.

Now Mr Spencer is here confusing—as Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansel did before him—a chimerical Absolute which cannot even exist, with the actual Absolute of which we have at any rate an "indefinite consciousness." In the strict etymological meaning of the words, there can be no Unconditioned Absolute. For every existence—divine as well as human—is necessarily conditioned by, or related to, every other

existence. The inability to know that which can never be related to anything, is only the inability to know that which cannot possibly exist. But the real Absolute, according to Mr Spencer himself, so far from not existing in *any* relations, exists actually in *all*. The inscrutable Power which underlies and outlasts all phenomena, manifests itself, he tells us, in each one of them; and in every definite state of consciousness we have an indefinite consciousness of its presence. The unconditioned—"the raw material of consciousness"—though independent of any particular form or condition, nevertheless always exists in some form or other; it is, to use his own expression, "conditioned anew in every thought." Mr Spencer's Unconditioned, therefore, is constantly conditioned; his Absolute is essentially and unceasingly relative.

In regard to the Absolute there is the same evidence of confusion in Mr Spencer's thinking, as we formerly noticed in regard to the finite ego. He insists very strongly on the fact that our belief in the Absolute possesses the highest degree of certainty. We believe, he says, that it survives all changes, persists through all forms, and is superior to all the conditions to which it is successively related. And "since the only pos-

sible measure of validity among our beliefs is the degree of their persistence in opposition to the efforts made to change them, it follows that this, which persists at all times, and cannot cease until consciousness ceases, must have the highest validity of any." And yet the object of this belief he persists in designating the Unknowable. Beliefs of inferior validity he calls knowledge; while that which has the highest possible validity he regards as ignorance.

He was led into this curious contradiction by his mistaken interpretation of the doctrine of relativity. In one sense that doctrine is a self-evident truth: it simply means that the relation of subject and object is involved in all thought—that every object of knowledge is necessarily related to an intelligent subject. But in another sense—and this is the interpretation of Hamilton, Mansel, and Spencer—the doctrine of relativity is false, and even ridiculous. These philosophers are not content with asserting that *knowledge* is relative; they proceed further to maintain that *existence* may be non-relative or absolute. There is, they tell us, a Being incapable of relation. As I explained above, such a Being cannot exist. And if it did, we should never be able even to think of its possibility; for the object of every

thought is of course related to the mind of him who thinks it. The Absolute—in regard to which Mr Spencer holds the theory that it cannot enter into relations—is rendered relative by that very theory, if by nothing else. Not only so; it is further rendered relative by the fact that it underlies, or coexists with, all the successive states of every finite consciousness. And upon this fact Mr Spencer himself very strongly insists. His supposed demonstration, therefore, of the unknowableness of God turns out to be nothing better than a curious fallacy. He argues that the Absolute is unknowable, because if it were known it would be relative. But, on his own showing, the Absolute is relative, and therefore there is nothing to prevent its being known.

When Mr Spencer's arguments are thus freed from confusion, it will be seen he admits that we are acquainted, through experience, with a mind or ego distinguishable from sensations and thoughts,¹ and that we are capable of perceiving this finite ego to be essentially of the same nature as the Inscrutable Power which underlies all mental and material phenomena. He too, therefore, is in implicit agreement with Hegel and with the Pentateuch, in regarding our own

¹ See note, p. 39, and 'Personality,' sec. i.

finite self-consciousness as the direct outcome of the self-consciousness of God.¹

¹ In regard to this chapter the Westminster Reviewer contents himself with saying, "Professor Momerie plunges into Psychology, and solves the mysteries of the human mind with marvellous celerity and sleight of hand." This can scarcely be considered a satisfactory vindication of Mr Herbert Spencer.

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERNATURAL PURPOSE.

WE have seen it is admitted by Haeckel, the most eminent materialist of modern times, that what we call matter is always accompanied by something mental. We have seen further it is admitted by Mr Herbert Spencer, the philosophic exponent of agnosticism, that there exists, and has always existed, an Inscrutable Power, of which every phenomenon is a manifestation, and of which our own finite consciousness is a mode. Evidently then the theory of evolution, according to its ablest exponents, allows and compels us to believe that something of the nature of mind has existed all through the evolutionary development of matter. It remains to inquire whether that development has been in any way mentally determined. In other words, is the world in which we live the result of design?

Now it is remarkable that, from the very beginning, men have generally found it impossible to eradicate the belief in superhuman purpose. Sometimes this purpose is regarded as immanent, and sometimes as transcendent; but implicitly, if not explicitly, it is always admitted. *E.g.*, Epicurus, who tried to put an end to the religious terrors of the time, by showing that there was no supernatural interference with mundane affairs, transferred to the atoms the purpose which he denied to the gods. It had been asserted by Democritus that collisions took place among the primitive particles of matter, because the larger particles moved faster than the smaller, and so overtook and combined with them. To this Aristotle had objected that in empty space, where there was no atmospheric resistance, everything would fall equally fast, and so the combinations would never have been effected. The force of this objection was acknowledged by Epicurus. In order to obviate it, he imagined a small deviation from the straight line in the fall of the atoms. But he would not allow that this deviation could have been produced from without. So he endowed the individual atoms with a certain degree of spontaneity or free will, and maintained that they deviated from the perpendicular of their own accord.

Similar illustrations might be collected almost without number. "The recognition of an immanent purpose," says Lange, the historian of materialism, "in our conception of nature, can so little be dispensed with, that we find it admitted even by Vogt." Hartmann again, according to whom the universe is the outcome of unconsciousness, speaks of "the wisdom of the Unconscious"; of "the mechanical contrivances which It employs"; of "Its direct activity in bringing about complete adaptation to the peculiar nature of the case"; of "Its incursions into the human brain, which determine and guide the course of history in all departments of civilisation, in the direction of the goal intended by the Unconscious." The works of Darwin are commonly supposed to have disproved the existence of design; but they teem with illustrations of contrivances, expedients, and mechanisms, which it is impossible to regard as undesigned.

It is remarkable, too, that those who are loudest in denying the existence of purpose are constantly using the very word which they declare to be illegitimate. Haeckel, for example, in the very book in which he says that "the much-talked-of purpose in Nature has no existence," defines an organic body as "one in which

the various parts work together for the purpose of producing the phenomena of life." And that this is no slip of the pen, may be seen in his description of the manner in which an organic body is built up. The most complicated animal or vegetable organism, he says, is merely a combination of little nucleated lumps of protoplasm called cells. The building up of an organism by these cells he compares to the formation of a State. The simple cells, he says, at first exist in an isolated condition, each performing the same kind of work and being satisfied with self-preservation, nutrition, and reproduction. This condition of affairs corresponds to a community of human beings as yet uncivilised. But at a later period in the history of evolution, the isolated cells gather themselves together into communities, and act like citizens who wish to form a State. "Groups of simple cells remain together, and begin to perform different offices. Some take to one occupation, some to another, and they all work together for the good of the whole. One set of cells devote themselves to the absorption of food; others form themselves into protecting organs for the little community; some become muscle-cells, others bone-cells, others blood-cells, others nerve-cells. By this division of labour

it becomes possible for the whole State to accomplish undertakings which would have been impossible for the single individual. In short, various classes or castes arise in the cell-state, following diverse occupations, and yet working together for a common purpose. In proportion as the division of labour progresses, the many-celled organism—the specialised cell-community—becomes more perfect or civilised. But the vital phenomena of the most perfect organism depend entirely on the activities of the cellular albuminous corpuscles.” According to Haeckel, therefore, every cell in every organism is a little personality, possessing a purpose of its own.¹

But it may be argued that when scientific men speak in this way, it is because of the poverty of language, or through an occasional aberration of intellect, which leads them for the moment to adopt popular and erroneous views. It may be

¹ My reviewer in the ‘Westminster’ says that in this chapter I “confuse the popular with the more restricted scientific sense of the word ‘purpose.’” What this restricted sense may be I cannot tell, for no scientific man has ever attempted to define it. The fact I am insisting upon is this, that the popular word “purpose” is constantly used *in the popular sense* with reference to the products and processes of nature by writers who as constantly maintain that there is in nature no evidence of purpose whatsoever.

said that the conception of purpose is unscientific, and should be got rid of altogether. But I reply, the conception is not unscientific. The supposition that Nature *means something* by what she does, has not unfrequently led to important scientific discoveries. It was in this way that Harvey found out the fact of the circulation of the blood. He took notice of the valves in the veins in many parts of the body, so placed as to give free passage to the blood towards the heart, but opposing its passage in the contrary direction. Then he bethought himself, to use his own words, "that such a provident cause as Nature had not placed so many valves without a design; and the design which seemed most probable was that the blood, instead of being sent by these veins to the limbs, should go first through the arteries, and return through other veins whose valves did not oppose its course." Thus, apart from the supposition of purpose, the greatest discovery in physiological science might never have been made.

Now when the theory of evolution was less firmly established than at present, it was constantly urged in favour of it that, whether true or not, it was a good working hypothesis, and therefore scientifically valid. The supposition of purpose in Nature, though it has not re-

ceived, seems to me to deserve at least as much respect.

However, although an immanent purpose is almost universally admitted, the transcendent purpose of a personal God is nowadays constantly denied. Such a purpose is supposed to be disproved: first, by the uniformity of Nature; and secondly, by the principle of evolution.

Now I gladly admit that the uniformity of Nature is incompatible with a certain kind of purpose. The world in which we live bears no trace of capricious interference. Even the changes which it undergoes take place according to unchanging laws. It exhibits no signs of vacillation or fickleness or irregularity. Its cause, whatever else it be, is manifestly "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." For this reason certain crude theories, which were at one time very popular, can now no longer be held. Take, as example, the theory of cataclysms, which was supported by the authority of Cuvier and Agassiz. There had been, it was said, a series of quite distinct periods of creation, each period having its peculiar flora and fauna. These periods were separated from one another by revolutions of an unknown kind, called cataclysms or catastrophes; and each revolution

resulted in the utter extinction of the then existing animals and plants. Afterwards a completely new set of organisms were created, which existed on the globe for thousands of years, till they in their turn perished suddenly in the crash of a new revolution. Haeckel's caustic remarks upon this doctrine cannot be considered unjust. "According to this view," he says, "the Creator is nothing but a mighty man, who, plagued with *ennui*, amuses Himself with planning and constructing varied toys in the shape of organic species. After having diverted Himself with these for thousands of years, they became tiresome to Him, and He destroys them by a general revolution of the earth's surface. Then, in order to while away His time, He calls a new organic world into existence. At the end of thousands of millions of years, He is struck with the happy thought of creating something like Himself, and man appears upon the scene, who gives the Creator so much to do that He is wearied no longer, and therefore need not undertake any new creation." The uniformity of Nature is of course quite incompatible with all such doctrines. And we may feel very thankful if we have heard the last of them.¹

¹ See also 'Agnosticism,' pp. 129-134.

But it is constantly forgotten that purpose is not necessarily fickle. Comte says our power of foreseeing phenomena destroys the belief that they are governed by changeable wills. True ; but it does not destroy the belief that they are governed by a will which is unchangeable. Purpose may be as constant and as regular as Law. Indeed the laws of nature may be regular, just because they are the outcome of a will whose purposes are always the same. "Nowadays," says Comte, "the heavens declare no other glory than that of Hipparchus, Kepler, Newton, and the rest, who have discovered the laws of their sequence." He assumes that the sequences, because they are regular, cannot have had a cause. Nothing could be more absurd. According to Comte, a disorderly system of nature would require a supernatural explanation, but an orderly system requires none. To say this, is to maintain that God could only be manifested by the attributes of fickleness and impotence. If He were always interfering with things like an operative in a mill, who has constantly to stop his machinery to join a broken thread ; if Nature were so paltry a system that God had continually to interpose an order to rectify her defects,—then He would be recognised. But His existence is

denied, forsooth, because it is not revealed by failures and mistakes. Unless method be a proof of irrationality, the reign of law does not compel us to reject the evidence of design in Nature. The only reign of law incompatible with volition would be the reign of the law of chaos. And though irregularities in nature might suggest *supernatural* interferences, such interferences would be absolutely incompatible with any purpose properly called *divine*.

The doctrine of the uniformity of nature, then, does not afford a shadow of evidence against the existence of a relation between the world and God. It is only incompatible with a certain low order of relationship. And it is just the same with the principle of evolution, which has merely disproved one particular kind of adaptation—the adaptation, viz., of a human artificer. Formerly men believed that every species, every organism, and every part of every organism, had been individually adapted and contrived by the Creator, for the accomplishment of a definite end, just as each portion of a watch is the result of a particular act of contrivance on the part of the man who made it. God was regarded as a great Mechanician—spelt with a capital M it is true, but employing means and methods for the accom-

plishment of His purposes more or less similar to those which would be used by a human workman. This view, in addition to its *a priori* improbability, has been disproved by facts, especially by those facts with which we have become acquainted in the study of comparative anatomy. We frequently find in animals what are called rudimentary or abortive organs, which are manifestly not adapted to any end, which never can be of any use, and whose presence in the organism is sometimes positively injurious. For example, there are snakes that have small rudimentary legs—so rudimentary that they cannot walk upon them. The cowfish has the rudiments of an arm and hand, highly developed and yet perfectly useless. The bones of this organ exactly correspond with those which are found in a human being. There are the five fingers with every joint distinct; but they are enclosed in a stiff, inflexible skin, so that not a joint can ever move. Similarly, there are insects that have wings, with which they cannot fly—wings that are tightly fastened down and enclosed in sheaths. Man himself has abortive organs. In the *os coccyx* there are from three to five vertebræ of a tail. And what is called the *appendix vermiformis* corresponds to an organ which is useful enough in

birds and marsupials, though in the human body it is not only useless but dangerous. If a hard substance, such as an orange pip, lodges in it, the result may sometimes be inflammation and death; and in other indirect ways it is not infrequently a source of mischief. Such facts as these—and the instances might be multiplied indefinitely—are absolutely inconsistent with the old theory of design. No machinist ever hampered or disfigured his machine by utterly useless adjuncts; still less would he purposely put into it anything which was likely to interfere with its successful working, or to lead to its ultimate destruction. The method of the Creator, then, whatever it may be, is certainly not that of a human mechanician.

A different and far higher method is suggested by the doctrine of evolution, according to which species have been produced not by distinct creative acts, but by transmutation and descent from one, or at any rate a few, primordial types. This doctrine may now be considered as practically demonstrated, thanks to the light which has been shed on it by the sciences of anatomy and physiology, geology, palæontology, and embryology. These sciences have put the blood relationship of species beyond a doubt. The embryos of exist-

ing animals are found, again and again, to bear the closest resemblance to extinct species, though in the adult form the resemblance is obscured. In some cases we have discovered in geological strata the intermediate links through which one species has ascended, so to speak, into another. In the archæopteryx in the British Museum, we see a bird emerging from the reptile stage of existence. It has the finger-like claws of a reptile, and it has a reptile's tail, with the addition of some feathers. Similarly, in the iguanodon we have an instance of a creature going up, as it were, in the scale of being. It was more a reptile than anything else; yet it walked on its hind legs, and had a snout prolonged like a beak. But of all instances of verified gradation, that afforded by the horse is the most complete and striking. Between our existing species and the orohippus of the Eocene period, four intermediate fossil species have been discovered, making six in all. The first of these, the orohippus, has four toes; next to him comes an equine animal with three toes and a large splint, as it is called, replacing the aborted fourth toe; then an animal with three toes and a very small splint; then three toes without a splint; then one toe and two splints; and lastly, we have our own one-toed

horse, in which the two splints of the species that preceded him have almost disappeared. And when we learn that these fossil animals were found in different geological strata, that the one which differs most from our own horse was discovered in the lowest or first deposited stratum, and the one which differs least in the highest or last deposited stratum—in other words, that these six equine species inhabited the earth in the order of time corresponding exactly with the order of gradation—we have no alternative but to conclude that the last is a lineal descendant of the first.

It can then no longer be doubted that evolution is a law, a fundamental law, of Nature. The knowableness of God, therefore, if it is to be proved at all, must be proved upon the understanding that evolution is the method, or at any rate one of the methods, by which Nature works. And evolution is incompatible with isolated, intermittent, changing, or incongruous purposes.

But surely unity of design is no argument against a designer. It is frequently assumed by evolutionists that organisms have not been designed at all, because their various parts have not been individually designed. We now know that

any particular organ in one species is merely an evolution from a somewhat different kind of organ in another species. But a moment's reflection should suffice to show that particular, isolated, disconnected acts of creation are not the necessary, nor even the proper, proof of a general, all-embracing purpose. Though the eyes of animals have not been separately created, the possibility of vision may still have been intended to emerge in the process of evolution.

For this statement I am glad to be able to refer to the authority of Professor Huxley. In the 'Academy' for October 1869 he says: "No doubt it is quite true that the doctrine of evolution is the most formidable opponent of all the coarser forms of teleology. The teleology which imagines that the eye, such as we find it in man or one of the higher animals, was made with the precise structure it exhibits for the purpose of enabling the animal who possesses it to see, has undoubtedly received its death-blow. But it is necessary to remember that there is a wider teleology, which is not touched by the doctrine of evolution, but is actually based upon the fundamental proposition of evolution. That proposition is, that the whole world, living and not living, is the result of the mutual interaction,

according to definite laws, of the forces possessed by the molecules of which the primary nebulosity was composed. From this it follows that the existing world lay potentially in the cosmic vapour; and that a sufficient intelligence could, from a knowledge of the properties of the molecules of that vapour, have predicted, say, the state of the fauna of Britain in 1869 with as much certainty as one can tell what will happen to the vapour of breath in a cold winter's day." "Consider," Professor Huxley continues, "the kitchen clock, which ticks loudly, shows the hours, minutes, and seconds, strikes, cries 'cuckoo,' and perhaps shows the phases of the moon. When the clock is wound up, all the phenomena which it exhibits are potentially contained in its mechanism; and a clever clock-maker could, after an examination of its structure, predict all it will do. If the evolution theory is correct, the molecular structure of the cosmic gas stands in the same relation to the phenomena of the world as the structure of the clock to its phenomena. So that the teleological and mechanical views of Nature are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the more purely a mechanist the speculator is, the more firmly does he assume the primordial molecular arrangement, of which all

the phenomena of the universe are the consequences; and the more completely is he thereby at the mercy of the teleologist, who can always defy him to prove that this primordial molecular arrangement was not intended to evolve the phenomena of the universe." In other words, the phenomena of Nature may be mechanically produced — produced, that is to say, without any *intervention* of will, and yet the mechanism which produces them may have been expressly designed for that purpose.

At any rate, the molecular structure of the cosmic gas, if it was not intentional, must have been accidental. It was due either to purpose or to chance. This alternative cannot be avoided by asserting that the world is the outcome of law; for law itself must be accounted for in one or other of these alternative ways. A law of Nature explains nothing. It is merely a summary of the facts to be explained—merely a statement of the way in which things happen. *E.g.*, the law of gravitation is the fact that all material bodies attract one another, with a force varying directly as their mass and inversely as the squares of their distances. Now the fact that bodies attract one another in this way cannot be explained by the law; for the law is

nothing but the precise expression of the fact. To say that the gravitation of matter is accounted for by the law of gravitation, is merely to say that matter gravitates because it gravitates. And so of the other laws of Nature. Taken together, they are simply the expression, in a set of convenient formulæ, of all the facts of our experience. The laws of Nature are the facts of Nature summarised. To say, then, that Nature is explained by law, is to say that the facts are explained by themselves. The question remains—Why are the facts what they are? And to this question we can only answer—though the alternative is seldom recognised—either through purpose or by chance.

In favour of the latter hypothesis, it may be urged that the *appearance* of purpose in Nature has possibly been produced by chance. Arrangements which look intentional may occasionally be purely accidental. *Something* was bound to come of the play of atoms; why not the particular world in which we find ourselves?

Why not? For this reason: It is only within narrow limits that seemingly purposeful arrangements are accidentally produced. And therefore, as the signs of purpose increase, the presumption in favour of their accidental origin diminishes.

It is the most curious phenomenon in the history of thought, that the philosophers who delight to call themselves experiential should have countenanced the theory of the accidental origin of the world—a theory with which our experience, so far as it goes, is completely out of harmony. When only eleven planets were known, De Morgan showed that the odds against their moving in one direction round the sun with a slight inclination of the planes of their orbits—had chance determined the movement—would have been 20,000,000,000 to 1. And this movement of the planets is but a single item, a tiny detail, an infinitesimal fraction, in a universe which—in spite of all arguments to the contrary—still appears to be pervaded through and through with purpose. Let every human being now alive upon the earth spend the rest of his days and nights in writing down arithmetical figures; let the enormous numbers which these figures would represent—each number forming a library in itself—be all added together; let this result be squared, cubed, multiplied by itself ten thousand times; and the final product would still fall infinitely short of expressing the probabilities against the world having been evolved by chance. Whoever believes in its accidental

origin must have a singularly constituted mind. In comparison with such a supposition, the most extravagant vagaries of a theological fanatic, the wildest imaginings of a raving lunatic, are calm and sober sense.¹

¹ Mr Darwin, in a letter dated April 1873, says: "The impossibility of conceiving that this grand and wondrous universe, with our conscious selves, arose through chance, seems to me the chief argument for the existence of God."

CHAPTER V.

THE INFINITE PERSONALITY.

ONE further step remains to be taken. Strong though the argument be in favour of supernatural purpose, it does not amount to a complete demonstration of the existence of God. For (1) it is but an argument from probability; and though the chance of an accidental origin for the world may be infinitesimal, still, such as it is, it remains in spite of the argument from design. (2) There are in Nature many objects and events which seem to us out of harmony with any rational system of things. (3) The argument from design *presupposes* the existence of matter and force, which might thus turn out to be independent of, and even in the end superior to, the Intelligence whose purposes they were at present made to fulfil.

But if we proceed to analyse our experience,

and to ask what is implied in the terms knowledge and existence, we shall see that, in the very possibility of experience, there is implied the unceasing activity of an infinite and eternal Personality essentially similar to our own. In other words, our knowledge of the material world—nay, even the very being of that world—is dependent on the existence of God.

The understanding, said Kant, makes Nature. This is true in two senses.

I. Our knowledge of matter is a result of the activity of our own individual minds. The popular notion of course is, that matter exists apart from consciousness. We are merely the passive recipients of its effects—effects which it produces by acting on our sensibility and exciting in us sensations. Material objects, it is commonly imagined, exist as objects whether they are perceived or not. They are in themselves just what they are for consciousness. All the qualities of material things, their solidity, extension, weight, colour, taste, &c., are supposed by the uncritical mind to have a separate existence—a purely objective existence—of their own. But reflection will show that what are called secondary qualities, such as taste and colour, can exist only in and for a sentient subject: there is no such

thing, *e.g.*, as an untasted taste. And further reflection will convince us that the primary qualities, such as extension and solidity, are also subjective sensations: the feeling of hardness, for instance, is no less a feeling than that of taste.

Further, sensation by itself—apart from the constructive activity of thought—would tell us nothing about a material world. From the senses we only receive sensations—successive, isolated, transitory, disconnected, and unmeaning. But such sensations are not knowledge. Before they can be known even as sensations, they must be compared, distinguished, and made to take their place in the connected whole of experience. The sensation of roughness, *e.g.*, is only perceived as roughness, after being contrasted with other sensations that have preceded it, and especially with those of smoothness. The knowledge of any feeling, then, implies at least three *relations*—those, *viz.*, of sequence, of similarity, and of difference.

Relations, however, are apprehended not by feeling, but by thought.¹ The terms of a relation are, to feeling, successive; but in a rela-

¹ See note, p. 39. Feeling and sensation (I may add) are here used as synonyms.

tion, as such, the terms must be coexistent. If either was before or after the other, there would be no relation between them; for manifestly two things, one of which is non-existent, cannot be related. Now the coexistence of successive feelings is only possible when they are apprehended by a single, permanent subject. In other words, relations can only exist in the unity of self-consciousness. Every relation is an idea, a metaphysical form or category, which the mind applies to the plurality of sensations; and, without the application of such forms, neither a feeling nor anything else could ever become an object of knowledge.

Once more, every material thing—even the simplest conceivable atom—is a complex of sensible qualities. The external stimulus of the sensibility, such as the vibration of the ether or the optic nerve, is not the object perceived. Nor do sensations, as such, constitute an object, for they occur in succession, while the object is regarded as a single coexistent whole. The qualities which are given separately to the senses must be *united* before any material object can be perceived. *E.g.*, my perception of this book involves certain phenomena—such as colour, weight, size, and shape—regarded as ex-

isting in definite relations to one another. This plurality must have been bound together into unity before the object could be known. And such a conversion of plurality into unity is only possible to a permanent subject, which is equally present to the successive sensations, which distinguishes them from one another and from itself, and which sees how the existence of each involves, or is involved in, the existence of the others. In one word, objects of experience exist only in and for *self-consciousness*. Things as we know them are the work of thought. There would be for us no material world at all, except for the activity of our own minds.—This is the first sense in which it may be said that the understanding makes Nature.

II. But the statement is also true in another and profounder sense. Not only does our finite understanding enable us to know the material world as an orderly system of relations, but another Understanding—infinite, though at the same time *in essence* identical with our own—is the source of that orderly system of relations which we know. Although reflection shows that we make the objects of knowledge, through the reaction of our minds upon the stimulants of sensation, it is nevertheless impossible to regard

those objects as mere figments of imagination, as the arbitrary and capricious creations of our own individual intelligence. For (1) we do not make the stimulants of sensation, upon which our minds react. (2) We do not make our minds, whose reaction takes place according to definite laws beyond our power to control. And (3) things remain the same whether we, as individuals, perceive them or not. *E.g.*, the pen with which I am writing does not owe its existence to my personal consciousness. Its qualities of length, hardness, weight, &c., would exist in the same definite relations to one another, even though it had never been perceived by any one since it left the hands of the manufacturer. The consciousness, therefore, which is the pre-supposition of matter, is neither yours nor mine, nor that of any other finite individual. If it were, matter would always be going out of, or coming into, existence, according as we did, or did not, perceive it. The stability of the material world implies the existence of a consciousness which is omnipresent. The permanent possibility of definitely related sensations can only be accounted for, on the supposition of an Infinite mind in and through which they are related. Just as Nature becomes actually known

to us through the unifying processes of our own self-consciousness, so conversely, in the fact that Nature is a possible object of knowledge, there is implied a similar activity on the part of a self-consciousness other than our own. We could have no experience of unrelated objects. Knowledge would be impossible unless things were objectively related as subjectively we perceive them to be. And nothing but self-consciousness can combine the plurality of phenomena into that unity of relations which is implied in the fact of experience. Corresponding then to the constructive activity of our own mind, which enables us to know the material world as a system of relations, there must be the constructive activity of another Mind, essentially akin to our own, which produces and maintains the system of relations that we know. In other words, the intelligence, of which our mental constitution is the outcome, and to which we owe subjectively the very possibility of knowledge, is, at the same time, objectively the source of that orderly relation amongst phenomena, which alone makes them possible objects of experience. Our limited consciousness implies the existence of a consciousness that is unlimited. The life of every finite personality bears undeni-

able testimony to the necessary existence of an infinite Personality.

And further, not only does the very existence of matter, as we know it, depend on the prior existence of an Infinite Mind, but all the sciences contain the same implicit reference. "Science," says Lange, "must start from the principle of the intelligibleness of Nature;" and again, "In the rational study of Nature, only intelligible causes must be admitted." Science, according to Bacon's well-known phrase, is "the interpretation of Nature." To interpret is to explain; and nothing can be explained which is not in itself rational. Nature is interpretable because she has an intelligent constitution. And to say that her constitution is intelligent, is to say that she is dominated and suffused by thought. Thought can only grasp what is the outcome of thought. Reason can only comprehend what is reasonable. You cannot explain the conduct of a fool. You cannot interpret the actions of a lunatic. They are chaotic, irregular, contradictory, meaningless, absurd. It is only in proportion to a man's intelligence that his actions bear an intelligible relation to one another. Similarly, if Nature were a mere chaos, an irrational system, there would be no possibility of knowledge. If the atoms were rushing aim-

lessly about, we could never discover what they were after : we could never foresee what would happen next. Even supposing they had by chance produced such a world as this, no reliance could be placed upon them. At any moment they might do something which they had never done before. At any moment the earth might vanish from beneath our feet ; or, in ten thousand other ways, the prevailing arrangements might be suddenly reversed. There could be no course of Nature, no laws of sequence, no possibility of scientific prediction, in the case of an irrational play of atoms. But, as it is, we know exactly how the forces of Nature act, and how they will continue to act. We can express their mode of working in the most precise mathematical formulæ. All the parts of Nature are bound together by intellectual, and therefore intelligible, relations. Progress in knowledge consists in discovering the order, the law, the system, in a word the reason, which underlies material phenomena. Interpreting Nature is neither more nor less than making our own the thoughts which Nature implies. Scientific hypothesis consists in guessing at these thoughts ; scientific verification in proving that we have guessed aright. When, after many failures, Kepler at last hit upon the

laws of planetary motion, he exclaimed, "O God, I think again Thy thoughts after Thee!" The discovery of these thoughts, it is evident, is not the creation of them. Science is but a partial copy of an intellectual system which existed long before the birth of man. Truth is not that which you or I may chance to believe. Devotion to truth is just the determination to give up our own individual fancies and predilections, to lay aside our own private and erroneous views, and to adopt the thoughts which are higher than ours—the thoughts, viz., of the Infinite Thinker.

But is the Infinite Thinker God? That is, is He good? Experience answers—Yes. For the Power which is not ourselves, the Power which underlies ourselves and all finite things, unmistakably "makes for righteousness." There is no other fact so plain, no other fact in regard to which all intelligent men are in such complete accord. On this matter, Hegel and Comte, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the Royal Society, Mr Matthew Arnold and Mr Spurgeon, however differently they may express themselves, are in reality agreed. They all believe that, on the whole and in the long-run, it is not well with the wicked; that slowly but surely, both in the lives of individuals and of nations,

good triumphs over evil. And this tendency towards righteousness, by which we find ourselves encompassed, meets with a ready response in our own hearts. We cannot help respecting goodness, and we have inextinguishable yearnings for its personal attainment. Notwithstanding "sore lets and hindrances," notwithstanding the fiercest temptations, notwithstanding the most disastrous failures, these yearnings continually reassert themselves. We feel, we know that we shall always be dissatisfied and unhappy, until the tendency within us is brought into perfect unison with the tendency without us, until we ourselves also make for righteousness, steadily, unremittingly, and with our whole heart. What is this disquietude, what are these yearnings, but the Spirit of the universe in communion with our spirits, inspiring us, impelling us, all but forcing us, to become co-workers with Itself? Here, again, we have evidence of the essential similarity between our own personality and God's. As Goethe well puts it:—

" Wår' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Die Sonne könn't es nie erblicken ;
Låg' nicht in uns des Gottes eigne kraft,
Wie könn't uns Göttliches entzücken ? "

But I shall be told by the agnostics that this,

after all, is only a kind of anthropomorphism; and by anthropomorphism is meant the degradation of the Almighty to our own level. There are, however, two totally different kinds of anthropomorphism. The one attributes to God what is lowest in humanity, and peculiar to it; the other attributes what is highest, and what, so far from being peculiar to ourselves, is essential to all intelligent and moral beings. Men have often, without doubt, ascribed to the Almighty their own evil passions, their own petty meannesses; and no words can be too strong for the denunciation of this kind of blasphemy. But the anthropomorphism which attributes to God such qualities as thought, purpose, consciousness, will, personality, is a very different matter. It is true that we cannot completely grasp the full significance of such words in their application to the Deity; for to do so would be to fathom His unfathomable nature. It is true that the purpose of One "who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," must be very different from the purpose of changing and changeable beings like ourselves. It is true that omniscience must be very different from the knowledge of those who can only become acquainted with a tiny fraction of the universe. It is true that a will which can never

be thwarted must be very different from wills which are always being reminded of their weakness. It is true that the thoughts of Him who sees the end from the beginning, must be very different from our thoughts, which are partial and incomplete. It is true that the goodness of One who has never erred must be very different from that of those who have "gone astray like lost sheep." In a word, it is true that the consciousness of an Infinite Personality is very different from the consciousness of a finite personality. But it is also true that purpose is none the less purpose because it is unchangeable. Knowledge is none the less knowledge because it is complete. Will is none the less will because it is unconquerable. Thought is none the less thought because it embraces the entire universe at once. Goodness is none the less goodness for being perfectly unadulterated with evil.¹ On the contrary, it is

¹ The Westminster Reviewer says that I have "made no attempt to face the difficulties of such a contradiction in terms" as is involved in the expression "Infinite Personality." But the remarks which I made on pp. 47-50 in reference to the Absolute apply also to the Infinite. And the idea that these terms, when predicated of a personal God, involve a contradiction, has long ago been exploded. John Stuart Mill, in his examination of Hamilton's philosophy, showed conclusively that the supposed contradiction was simply the result of confused and illogical thinking.

God alone to whom these words apply in their full and true significance. If they are illegitimately used at all, it is in their application to ourselves. And we do not degrade the Almighty by saying that He thinks and knows and wills. If the power behind Nature were destitute of these faculties, it would be infinitely inferior to the poorest type of man. There is a large number of thinkers in the present day, among whom it is a pity to find the author of 'Natural Religion,' who seem to think that the word Power is a very good synonym for God. Indeed it is not unfrequently asserted that to attribute to "the Unknowable" any other characteristic than that of force is presumptuous and irreverent. But in Power, as such, there is nothing divine. What care I for a Power that is eternally unconscious? It may have strength enough to dash the entire universe into shivers; but I perceive that it is senseless, and I look upon it with contempt.

To sum up: All knowledge, whether practical or scientific, nay, the very existence of anything to know, is based upon, and would be impossible without, the existence of an Infinite Mind. And the tendency towards righteousness, which is so unmistakably manifested in the course of human

history, together with the response which this tendency awakens in our own hearts, combine to prove that we are the children of a God. Further, this doctrine, though it glorifies man, does not in the least dishonour the Almighty. It fails, no doubt, fully to express His nature, but it is the most complete expression we are capable of formulating. Far removed as it is from being an adequate representation of Deity, every other view is infinitely farther from the truth.¹

¹ For the difficulties connected with sin and suffering, see my 'Origin of Evil, and other Sermons.'

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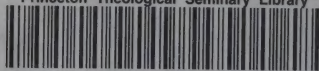
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